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ALBRIGHT WILL DEPART FOR ASIA JULY 24

(U.S. official outlines goals for SecState's trip) (450)

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Washington — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will depart for the Philippines July 24 to attend the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) in Manila.

She will also make stops in Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.

During a background briefing at the State Department July 22, a senior administration official said that during her stay in the Philippines, Albright will meet the newly elected President Joseph Estrada. She will also be giving a speech on July 29 outlining U.S.- Philippine relations.

The official said that during the ARF meetings, there will be an effort to change the focus from confidence building measures to "preventive diplomacy" when considering the security needs of the region.

The Asian financial crisis is expected to be a major topic for discussion during the PMC, and there will also be an effort to foster transnational issues such as the environment, and trafficking in women and narcotics, according to the U.S. official.

Albright's brief stop in Port Moresby is intended to give her a look at how the United States may further help Papua New Guinea recover and begin reconstruction after a devastating tidal wave. It also is intended to recognize the importance of this "giant of the Pacific Island States" in terms of its size, population and political influence, the U.S. official said.

The Secretary will be in Australia to attend annual ministerial meetings July 30-31. During that time she will deliver a major speech, the U.S. official said, although he declined to provide specifics.

Albright's August 1 stop in Auckland will be the first visit to New Zealand by a U.S. Secretary of State since then-Secretary of State George Shultz visited Wellington in July 1984. New Zealand's adoption of anti-nuclear laws banning nuclear weapons and nuclear powered ships from its territory forced the United States to suspend its security commitment to New Zealand in 1985.

The purpose of Albright's visit to New Zealand, according to the official, is to demonstrate that despite the problem of New Zealand's anti-nuclear legislation, the two nations still cooperate and work together on a number of important issues. "New Zealand has been very forthcoming as a model of free trade," the official noted, and has played an active role in peacekeeping operations around the world.

"It is entirely appropriate for the Secretary of State to visit (New Zealand) and to indicate what's right in the relationship as well as what needs to be fixed," the official said.

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